



MOSS WOOD

Newsletter

ISSUE 51

JULY 2003

Moss Wood 2000 Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon

There was a good growing season for the 2000 vintage in Margaret River. It started with mild to warm conditions up to Christmas, the hottest day of the year on New Year's Eve, and a January that was not as hot as December had been. There was significant rainfall in the third week of January which the vines soaked up and so remained stress free until harvest. Although the rain did cause downy mildew in some local vineyards, Moss Wood was not affected. One direct consequence of the downpour was that crop levels were higher than expected. This was a quality issue with the Pinot Noir which was lighter in colour than usual. The other varieties were not impacted: the 2000 Semillon is one of the best ever, while Keith believes that the same is true of the Cabernet.

He sees the 2000 as being closest in character to the 1980 and the 1990 Cabernets and, in some ways, a combination of the two. There were differences from the earlier vintages. There was more rainfall during the 1990 growing season. Although there was a similar amount in 1980, it came later. In all three cases, Keith sees the wines as soft and fruity with generous flavours and gentle, fine tannins.

The 2000 vintage also saw re-equipping of the winery with a new destemmer and a new conveyer. For the previous 28 vintages (1973-2002), Moss Wood had a Celestin Coq crusher/destemmer with must pump - for transferring crushed grapes into fermenters. Cup fulls of must were transferred by the gentle action of the pump. The rollers were set wide apart so that it didn't grind the skins and seeds and the destemmer was relatively gentle and tended to do minimal damage to the stalks. However, there was always the possibility that grapes could get squashed and skins damaged with the result that the wine would pick up some aggressive tannins.

The new machine, the Delta E2 Destemmer, involves no crushing of the grapes. It destems the berries and transfers them whole, plus some juice, by conveyer belt into the fermentation tanks. The destemming means that a minimal amount of tannin is extracted.

Given the 28 year difference in their age and the fact that the Delta E2 is made of stainless steel, it is scarcely surprising that the new machine is much easier to clean and so already well loved by winery staff.



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The other major difference with the 2000 wine is that it was the second - and last - Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon in which fermentation was triggered spontaneously by strains of wild yeast.

Apart from that, production followed the traditional Moss Wood approach. Fermentation took place at warm temperatures - up to 32°C. During the process, hand plunging took place four times a day. Each batch was left on skins after fermentation for between 10 and 14 days, depending on taste. After that, it was pressed and placed into barrel (50% new oak) for two years. All pressings were included in the finished wine. It was taken out of oak in July 2002, and filtered (but not fined) and bottled in August.

It was the first Moss Wood wine to be bottled partially under Stelvin (screw caps) ensuring that those bottles are not affected by cork taint. Keith is committed to bottling more and more using Stelvin caps. He plans to move from 200 cases of the 2000 Cabernet to 1,500 cases for the 2001. With the current vintage, Stelvin will be used for comparative

tastings to show its value as a closure. Apart from that, Stelvin caps will be available to



mail order customers on a first come – first served basis.

The 2000 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon is wonderfully fragrant with redcurrant, spice and cedary oak perfumes; is soft, round and velvety textured; has ripe, rich and concentrated sweet cassis, mulberry and cedar flavours and a lovely fleshy finish. This is an elegant Moss Wood that has the tightness of structure, impressive weight, bold vibrant characters, and restrained, fine, slinky tannins to ensure that it ages well, while having an approachability and a suppleness to make it appealing when young.

MOSS WOOD CABERNET SAUVIGNON

VINTAGE	HARVEST DATE	BEAUME (°)	YIELD (t/ha)	VINTAGE RATING (out of 10)
2002.....	20 Mar	13.3	10.1.....	(8.5)
2001.....	19 Mar	13.4	9.5.....	(9)
2000.....	28 Mar	14.0	10.3.....	9
1999.....	31 Mar	13.8	9.22.....	10
1998.....	30 Mar	13.5	10.0.....	8
1997.....	19 Mar	13.6	7.0.....	8
1996.....	14 Mar	13.7	10.0.....	10
1995.....	14 Mar	13.6	9.75.....	10
1994.....	25 Mar	12.8	8.89.....	8
1993.....	22 Mar	13.2	8.5.....	7
1992.....	26 Mar	12.8	10.0.....	7
1991.....	3 April.....	13.3	9.8.....	9
1990.....	2 April.....	12.8	8.5.....	9
1989.....	30 Mar	13.2	7.9.....	5
1988.....	10 Mar	13.0	7.1.....	6
1987.....	26 Mar	12.7	8.5.....	8
1986.....	14 Mar	12.8	5.8.....	6
1985.....	13 Mar	12.5	7.5.....	9
1984.....	12 Mar	12.3	9.0.....	6
1983.....	07 Mar	13.0	9.0.....	8

Vintage Chart

Review of Moss Wood 1999

Cabernet Sauvignon

Icon is a much overused word, but Moss Wood undoubtedly qualifies. Instead of empire-building - which seems to be the norm nowadays - Keith Mugford expends most of his effort just trying to perfect what he does. We admire his approach. He's done away with the Reserve bottling and aims to make just one wine of reserve quality. Current release 1999. This is a monumental cabernet: almost painfully intense and power-packed.

Huon Hooke in the latest *Penguin Australian Good Wine Guide*.

Moss Wood - two words please!

Perth-based freelance wine writer, Peter Forrestal, has been a judge of the Tucker Seabrook Australia's Wine List of the Year Awards for the ten years that it has been running. He commented recently on the number of wine lists around Australia that continue to misspell the name of the winery, 'Mosswood' instead of Moss Wood. "I'm surprised that such a mistake would happen with a high profile winery like Moss Wood," mused Peter.

Bill Pannell AM

Good news for all lovers of Moss Wood. Founder, Dr Bill Pannell has been awarded the Order of Australia as a member (AM) in the General Division for services to the wine industry. The announcement came as part of the recent Queen's Birthday Honours list. This follows acknowledgement by his peers, through the Wine Press Club of WA, of Bill's contribution to the WA wine industry in his time at Moss Wood and Picardy. Last year, Bill was awarded the Jack Mann Medal for his lifetime's work in pursuit of excellence in viticulture and winemaking.

VERTICAL TASTING

JAMES HALLIDAY

THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN AUG 31 - SEPT 1, 200

My last formal vertical tasting of Moss Wood took place almost eight years ago, covering the 1992 to 1973 vintages. So the opportunity presented by the Brisbane Hilton Food and Wine Masterclasses in July to taste the eleven vintages from 1991 to 2001 (plus the 1983 included for good measure) was perfect.

Moss Wood is one of the blue blood classics of Australia. Its site is unambiguously distinguished, identified long ago by the distinguished terroir (climate and soil) scientist Dr John Gladstones. The Margaret River climate has a general propensity to produce complex, structured, tannic cabernet sauvignon which nonetheless has a velvety richness - softness even - to its mid-palate. Nowhere, however, is that character more evident than at Moss Wood. Regardless of the vintage conditions, the wines have a generosity which makes them a pleasure to drink at almost any stage of their development.

The tasting opened with a barrel sample of the 2001, a vintage which winemaker/owner Keith Mugford hopes will turn out in much the same fashion as 1991, medium-bodied but with supple, sweet fruit in abundance.

The 2000 was taken from tank immediately prior to bottling (and in fact bottled prior to the Masterclass). Says Mugford "This is just about the model season by which all others will be judged", going on to add it "can be described easily by such technical winemaking terms as 'yummy'"! And indeed it is, with a wonderfully aromatic, complex cascade of sweet, spiced cake, fruit, velvety and rich.

It follows on the superb 1999, with its fragrant, scented cedar and cassis bouquet, the palate having outstanding structure, length and balance, the tannins fully ripe but fine.

CABERNET SAUVIGNON



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The vintage conditions in 1998 were marred by several periods of heavy rain, splitting and delaying the picking of the cabernet. The result was far better than one might have expected, the bouquet with blackberry, blackcurrant, cassis and cedar, the medium-bodied palate with added cedary/savoury flavours and fine tannins.

In Margaret River terms, the 1997 was a terrible year, with topsy turvy conditions throughout. While low-yielding, it produced a wine with savoury/earthy/briary flavours on a relatively austere palate, the tannins lingering. The hope is it will eventually turn the corner as the 1981 did after 15 years in bottle.

The only problem with the 1996 was birds, which agreed that the grapes were perfect. Mugford compares this vintage with the great 1976, and I can see why. Since I first tasted it three years ago, the fine and classic bouquet has developed distinct Bordeaux overtones, the core of fine, sweet fruit cradled in a web of ripe, sweet fruit.

Another Mugford twin is the 1995, which he links to the 1975. If anything, the growing conditions in 1995 were even better than 1996, and this gorgeous wine fully reflects the vintage, outstanding when first released, and even better now. Its chorus of aromas and flavours - truffles, coffee, dark chocolate, blackcurrant, mulberry and redcurrant - are cradled by supple, sweet and fine tannins.

The 1994 presented was the Special Reserve, the last of its line, simply because Keith

Mugford has not a single bottle of the 1994 standard wine, rather than for nostalgic reasons. The warm conditions of the vintage are reflected in the generosity and depth of the palate more than in the cedary/earthy bouquet.

If 1994 was warm, 1993 was cool, and it was a struggle to fully ripen the fruit. However, the wine has developed a distinct fragrance of earth and violets, the palate with blackcurrant, chocolate and distinct tannins.

The following vintage of 1992 was marked by warmth and near drought in the first half of the growing season, and by episodes of rain throughout the second half. Almost inevitably, the wine lacks the concentration of the better years, a mix of gently savoury/spicy flavours, the red fruit just holding on.

When I tasted the 1991 in October 1994, the wine was still fractionally hard in the mouth; eight years on it has blossomed into an elegant, harmonious - I am tempted to say luminous - medium-bodied cabernet, with great length and persistence. If anyone was to doubt that ten years in bottle shows Moss Wood to perfection, this wine should satisfy them.

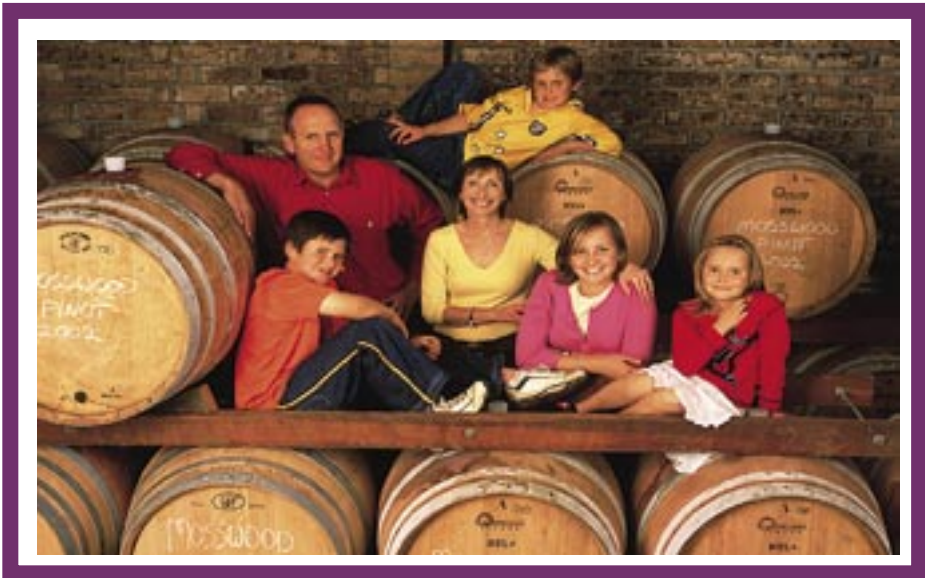
The final wine - the 1983 - took that argument one step further. In 1994 I rated it as four stars, noting the round, ripe dark fruits and strong tannins, but suggested it was at the prime of its life. But it is now a five-star wine, magnificently rich and robed, looking as if it will live forever.

PERTH INVASION

The Mugford family moved to Perth at the beginning of 2003. There were a range of reasons for this. Keith had had a minor health hiccup - which is no longer a problem - and there were schooling issues for the two eldest children, Eloise and Tristan. Eloise had missed the family terribly while at boarding school in Perth and with Tristan due for boarding school this year, it was decided that it might be easier if the whole family relocated.

place as a result of Keith's relocation has been a formalisation of the winemaking approaches at Moss Wood. Things that had previously been carried around in Keith's head have been committed to paper (actually, computer). Specifications for work in the vineyard and processes in the winery are now clearly defined and the meeting process has been formalised. This has come about partly because Moss Wood has adopted quality assurance procedures and partly to accommodate Keith's new managerial circumstances.

A result of all this has been a sharpening of the work practices at Moss Wood. The system no longer relies on one individual and the staff have more opportunities to suggest changes to what is done in the vineyard and winery.



Most importantly, Keith felt that the vineyard, winery and office staff were functioning so efficiently that it would not be a problem if he and Clare were living in Perth. Consequently, the most recent vintage has been the first since 1978 that Keith has not been present at Moss Wood on a day-to-day basis. (Twenty-four consecutive harvests! Not bad.)

Keith considered himself present in spirit through daily phone conversations and weekly visits to the property. Prior to vintage he tasted each variety at least once a week and received daily feedback from the production team. He had a clear view of how the grapes were ripening and how the flavours were developing.

One of the major changes that has taken

Where beforehand informal chats would have taken place over a cup of tea, this is now done more formally at regular meetings which follow a more disciplined format. The general feeling is that Moss Wood is more robust and more resilient. Keith is consulted about anything that happens which is not in accord with the agenda and continues to drive down to the winery once a week.

Keith points out that Moss Wood has already undergone one successful transition - when Bill and Sandra Pannell left in 1984. This took place without disruption: in fact, the 1985 vintage saw some of the best wines ever from the vineyard. Keith believes that there is no reason that the current transition will be any different.

TWO YEAR ITCH!

During her two years with us, **Wendy Lee-Steere's** artistic flair added a touch of colour to our lives. As an aside, she also assisted Aileen in the office and lent a hand showing visitors around Moss Wood. Wendy has resigned to join fiancé, winemaker Bruce Dukes, establishing Naturaliste Vintners, a contract winemaking facility. When construction is complete, the winery will be visible from Bussell Highway, about 2 km's south of Carburnup.



Vanessa Garland, who has become a close friend of our viticulturist Matthew Bowden in her two years at Moss Wood, is off to explore Europe at the end of July. Keith says that she's planning to gallivant around but Ness assures us that she wants to return to study next year. Vanessa's work in our office, arranging social functions and showing visitors around was greatly appreciated and we accept her resignation with regret.

After two years hard labour on the Moss Wood & Ribbon Vale properties, horticulturist, **Michelle Croft**, has left us to set up Yardcraft, a horticultural business in Perth, with partner Michael Rossi. While disappointed at her departure, we look forward to Yardcraft providing advice on a consultancy basis, ensuring we continue to benefit from the skills which have resulted in our much more attractive estates.



TO ALL THE GIRLS, THANK YOU VERY MUCH !

MOSS WOOD GOLF COURSE ?

The replacement for Michelle Croft is Michael Middleton, who is heading for Moss Wood from the Albany Golf Club. He must have heard that some of the local vigneron - namely, Nigel Gallop, Jeff Burch and Peter Laurance - have found room on their properties for a few holes of golf. No doubt Michael will be hoping to do some moonlighting.

Keith says that as long as he prepares an excellent cricket pitch for the team at Moss Wood to use - especially during vintage - he will fit in. Michael and his family will be living at Dunsborough.

NEW SCORE KEEPER ?

Mike Bowles, Moss Wood's first ever in-house finance manager joined the company at the beginning of February. Keith says that in spite of the usual accuracy of any of Monty Python's comments, current indications are that Mike might break the rule about accountants being boring. He comes from South Africa and this has led to a healthy exchange of views about cricket and rugby. His opinions may well have moderated somewhat since his arrival in Western Australia and unnamed sources report that he is prepared to build bridges by offering support to the Wallabies.

Banter aside, Keith comments that Mike has made a positive contribution to the organisation and suggests humbly (and sotto voce) that there is now a level of fiscal and administrative discipline in the business that he might never have been able to achieve.